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AUTHOR Evans, Joanna, Comp.
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ABSTRACT

Asbestos is a generic term that refers to several silicate materials occurring naturally as fibrous rocks. Insignificant amounts of asbestos fiber can be found in ambient air, but this, and materials containing hard asbestos, usually do not create problems. Soft materials, however, can release high amounts of asbestos fibers into the air, and exposure to high levels of the fibers have been found to cause such diseases as asbestosis, lung cancer, mesothelioma, and other cancers. This guide is intended to assist those who wish to research the uses, dangers, and problems of asbestos. It is designed to provide the reader with a set of resources found in the Library of Congress that can be used to focus on the topic. The document lists the subject headings used by the Library of Congress in cataloging information on asbestos. It also contains citations of materials categorized as: (1) brief introductions; (2) basic texts; (3) additional titles; (4) handbooks and encyclopedias; (5) other bibliographies; (6) conference proceedings; (7) government publications; (8) abstracting and indexing services; (9) journal articles; (10) technical reports; and (11) additional sources of information. (TW)

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ASBESTOS

Compiled by Joanna Evans

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SCOPE: Asbestos is a generic term that refers to several silicate materials occurring naturally as fibrous rocks in two forms: serpentine and amphibole. Approximately nine-tenths of all asbestos produced is chrysotile, a serpentine form, and mined chiefly in Canada and the U.S.S.R. Amosite and crocidolite are amphibole forms which are mined primarily in South Africa and comprise approximately one-tenth of asbestos production.

Asbestos is used in a variety of industries such as the construction industry (for roofing, plastics, insulation, floor tiling, and cement production), the automotive industry (for friction material in brake and clutch linings), and in the textile industry (for fire-resistant clothing, safety equipment, and curtains). Asbestos may also be used to strengthen the resistance of materials to the effects of heat.

Insignificant amounts of asbestos fiber can be found in ambient air. Materials that contain hard asbestos usually do not create problems. It is the soft, or friable, materials that can release high amounts of asbestos fibers into the air.

Exposure to high levels of asbestos fibers can cause such diseases as asbestosis, lung cancer, mesothelioma, and other cancers. Inhalation can occur from fibers transported in the clothing of workers or from direct contact with materials containing asbestos. Serious health effects can occur years after initial exposure. Thus there has been deep concern by government agencies, environmental groups, and the public about the presence of friable asbestos in buildings, especially schools. Current controversies include questions on the "safe" thresholds of asbestos exposure, the laboratory evaluation of the various types of fibers with respect to their role as causative agents of disease, and the abatement of asbestos from buildings that are considered hazardous to the health of their occupants.[1]

This guide is intended to assist those who wish to research the uses, dangers, and problems of asbestos. Not intended to be a comprehensive bibliography, this Tracer Bullet is designed--as the name of the series implies--to put the reader "on target."

[1] See also Tracer Bullet 86-8, Indoor Air Pollution.

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ASBESTOS INDUSTRY (Highly relevant)
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ASBESTOS DUST (Relevant)
ASBESTOS FIBERS (Relevant)
ASBESTOS IN BUILDING (Relevant)
ASBESTOSIS (Relevant)
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (More general)
OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES (More general)
POLLUTANTS--TOXICOLOGY (More general)

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ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Asbestos Information Association/North America
1745 Jefferson Davis Highway
Suite 509
Arlington, Virginia 22202
Telephone: (703) 979-1150

Environmental Protection Agency
Southeastern Asbestos Information Center
Georgia Institute of Technology
151 Sixth Street
O'Keefe Building, Room 029
Atlanta, Georgia 30318
Telephone: (404) 894-3806

Environmental Sciences Laboratory
Mount Sinai School of Medicine of the City of New York
1 Gustave L. Levy Place
New York, New York 10029
Telephone: (212) 650-6174

National Asbestos Council
2786 N. Decatur Road
Suite 240
Decatur, Georgia 30033
Telephone: (404) 292-3802

National Asbestos Training Center
University of Kansas
5005 W. 95th Street
Overland Park, Kansas 66207
Telephone: (913) 648-5790